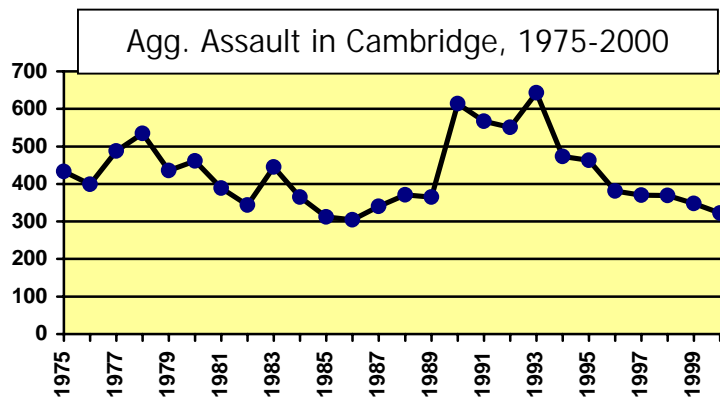


Assault



Aggravated Assault describes an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm. Attempts are included since it is not necessary that injury result when a gun, knife, or other weapon is used which could and probably would result in serious personal injury if the crime were successfully completed.

Unlike murder, robbery, and other violent crime, assault is born in the heat of the moment. The offender's motivation during an assault is rarely personal gain, and the offender often later regrets the incident. Perhaps the most preventable violent crime, many assaults in the making are probably curtailed through the careful use of control and restraint, or through the intervention of bystanders and police.

However, assault is a very serious crime because of the great risk of critical injury to the victim. Very often, blind luck or quick medical attention is all that separates an aggravated assault from a murder.

Between 1984 and 1989, assault registered about 350 incidents per year; in 1990, it suddenly jumped 41 percent to an unprecedented 614 reports. It peaked at 643 in 1993; since then, it has declined each year. 2000's total is the lowest total since 1986.

A good portion of these fluctuations can be attributed to the frequency of which the crime is reported to police, rather than the frequency of its actual occurrence. As domestic violence awareness has increased over the last decade, so has the willingness of domestic violence victims to report abuse to the police.

Despite advances made by domestic violence victim advocates in recent years, experts estimate that between 50 and 80 percent of domestic assaults are never reported to the police. Very likely, apathy, fear of police contact, embarrassment, and other factors also lead to underreporting of alcohol related fights,

assaults between acquaintances, gang fights, and conflicts among the homeless. The result is that assault statistics based on police reports are probably not reliable enough for effective long-term policy decisions.

Assault Categorizations

A chart and graph of aggravated assault classifications over the past two years appears below. This year, 35% were **domestic** in nature—a percentage slightly higher than past years. An analysis of domestic assaults and other crimes appears in the *Domestic Crimes* section of this report.

The second highest category of aggravated assaults during 2000 was **juvenile/ gang** related incidents,

| Type | 1999 | 2000 | % of Total |
|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Domestic | 104 | 113 | 35% |
| Juvenile | 28 | 43 | 13% |
| Acquaintance | 49 | 34 | 10% |
| Traffic/Parking | 30 | 31 | 10% |
| Bar/Liquor | 17 | 25 | 8% |
| Unprovoked | 50 | 25 | 8% |
| Homeless | 19 | 19 | 6% |
| Workplace | 6 | 9 | 3% |
| Landlord/Neighbor | 13 | 7 | 2% |
| Police Officer | 3 | 6 | 2% |
| Retail/Patron | 14 | 10 | 3% |
| Total | 348 | 322 | |

which increased by 54% when compared with the 1999 totals. Over twenty percent of these types of assaults occur in Area 4, with the intersection of Bishop Allen Drive and Douglas Street being a long-standing hot spot for altercations among youths. Sporadic encounters among juveniles in the early evening hours in and around the Galleria Mall have been a problem for a number of years.

"Unprovoked" aggravated assaults registered a dramatic drop of 50% in 1999. The majority of this decrease can be traced to fewer incidents in Harvard and Central Squares. Most of the victims reported that they were just walking down the street when attacked. However, other assaults were the result of

insignificant verbal confrontations. Most incidents seemed to result from the rage of others and involved weapons such as fists and feet, knives, and guns.

Acquaintance assaults run the gamut from drinking buddies to classmates. Two types of acquaintance assaults—**workplace** assaults and **landlord/neighbor** assaults—are singled out as unique categorizations. The impetuses behind these acquaintance assaults are as varied as the locations and times at which they occur.

Retail/Patron assaults are a special kind of incident in which the patron of an establishment assaults a clerk or manager. These assaults are often linked to shoplifting; store employees attempting to detain a shoplifter are struck in the shoplifter's escape or attempt to escape.

Traffic & Parking assaults are a reflection of the "road rage" often discussed in today's news. One driver cuts off another, takes "someone else's" parking space, honks his horn, exchanges an offensive look or gesture, and suddenly someone is attacking with a tire iron or other weapon. We find that these assaults tend to increase in the winter, when some residents fight over the few parking spaces that are shoveled out.

Relationships

Another way to look at aggravated assaults is to classify the relationship between the offender and the victim. Many, but not all, of the assault categorizations are based on this relationship. This list shows the relationship between the offender and the victim in the 322 aggravated assaults:

| Relationship | Total | % |
|---------------------|-------|-----|
| Stranger or Unknown | 133 | 41% |
| Misc. Acquaintance | 40 | 12% |
| Romantic Partner | 24 | 8% |
| Spouse | 19 | 6% |
| Ex-Romantic Partner | 18 | 6% |
| Parent/Child | 14 | 5% |
| Neighbor | 13 | 5% |
| C-Worker/Employee | 12 | 5% |
| Client/Patron | 9 | 3% |
| Neighbor | 9 | 3% |
| Sibling | 8 | 3% |
| Ex-Spouse | 4 | 1% |
| Schoolmate | 4 | 1% |
| Landlord/Tenant | 3 | 1% |
| Third / Lover | 3 | 1% |
| Teacher/Coach | 1 | 1% |

Weapons Used in 2000 Aggravated Assaults

| Weapon | Total | % |
|------------------------|-------|-----|
| Hands/Feet | 80 | 25% |
| Knife | 50 | 15% |
| Automobile | 19 | 7% |
| Bottle/Glass | 17 | 6% |
| Household/Kitchen Item | 16 | 5% |
| Handgun | 16 | 5% |
| Telephone | 10 | 3% |
| Stone/Rock | 9 | 3% |
| Furniture | 8 | 3% |
| Bicycle Lock | 6 | 3% |
| Bar / Pipe | 5 | 2% |
| Umbrella | 5 | 1% |
| Chemicals/Spray/Poison | 5 | 1% |
| Chain | 4 | 1% |
| Belt/Strap | 4 | 1% |
| BB Gun | 4 | 1% |
| Chemical Spray | 4 | 1% |
| Fire | 3 | 1% |
| Scalding Liquid | 3 | 1% |
| Hammer | 3 | 1% |
| Canine | 3 | 1% |
| Razor | 3 | 1% |
| Flashlight | 2 | 1% |
| Other/Unknown | 39 | 12% |

Assault Trends Observed in 2000:

Although not concise and distinctive crime patterns, the following trends in violent behavior were noted in 2000.

- Juvenile assaults in the vicinity of the Galleria...
- Road rage in the 100 to 300 blocks of Cambridge St.
- Bar related fights on Cambridge Street...
- Gang activity in the 400 block of Mass. Ave...
- Traffic and parking altercations in Central Square.
- Assaults of the homeless along Albany Street.
- Bar related assaults in the 300 block of Mass Ave
- Bar related assaults in the 700 block of Mass. Ave
- Assaults of the homeless in Harvard Square
- Domestic altercations in Central Square
- Domestic assaults at Walden Square
- Juvenile altercations at Bishop Allen Dr. & Douglass St.

Serious Assaults

Eight assaults involved immediate life-threatening injury to the victim:

- On March 8, 2000, police responded to a call on Cameron Avenue to find a resident sitting on his kitchen table holding his throat. The victim told authorities that he and his roommate had had

- An argument and the roommate stabbed in the neck with a kitchen knife.
- On March 29, 2000, a resident of Lopez Street was sitting on the front steps with his friend whom he later got into a fight with. During the dispute, the assailant stabbed his 'friend' in the chest with a kitchen knife.
- On May 3, 2000, a Washington Street resident was invited to his neighbors' house. When the neighbor's brother returned home, he went into a fit of rage after finding out who the guest was and stabbed the man over 20 times. The assailant's girlfriend tried to stop him from stabbing the man and he began to stab her in the throat.
- On August 8, 2000, a young man got out of his car behind Jefferson Park when he heard someone telling him to turn around. After turning around, he was shot in the chest after three shots were fired.
- On August 13, 2000, a young man got into a scuffle and was stabbed in the stomach with a knife.
- On August 28, 2000, a man was found on a bench in Paine Park covered in blood. The man had been shot in the head by an unknown person.
- On September 20, 2000, a man walking down the street approached a couple and made an offensive remark, which ended in an argument. During the argument, the man produced a knife and stabbed both victims in the stomach.

- On November 11, 2000, a young man was shot after threats were made from the attacker regarding a previous dispute.

In 43% of aggravated assaults, there was no injury to the victim. In 37% of cases, there was "mild" injury (e.g., a black eye, a bruise, a small cut); 15% showed "moderate" injury (e.g., several bruises, a large cut, a sprain or small broken bone); 3% "serious" injury (e.g., a broken bone, unconsciousness, severe bruising, a deep cut); and 2% "life-threatening" injury (e.g., a gunshot wound or stab wound in a vital area, any injury requiring immediate surgery). In 22% of cases, the victim required hospital care.

Simple Assault

Simple assaults, unlike aggravated assaults, are not scored among the Part I Crimes. Simple assaults do not involve the use of a dangerous weapon and are not intended to cause—and do not cause—serious injury. Examples of simple assaults include a shove, a punch in the stomach, or a slap in the face.

561 simple assaults were reported in 2000, up 10% from 1999, but if lack of reporting is a problem for aggravated assaults, it is probably doubly so for simple assaults, since they do not by definition result in serious injury.

Simple assaults are similar in categorization to aggravated assault, though a larger percentage of them—41%—are domestic in nature.

